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File:
Guidelines - Gen.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. GEORGE MCGHEE

FROM: W. W. Rostow

Herewith are some communal observations on the country guidelines papers that we have thus far seen.

1. You are, of course, conscious that these are of very uneven quality; for example, we all agree that the Mali, South African, and Japanese papers were better than some of the others. But we feel it would be most helpful to you if we do not try to assess the papers individually but, rather, confine this memorandum to a few general observations.

2. Purpose. Now that some experience has been acquired, it may be useful if the Department itself made a fresh assessment of precisely what purpose you wish these guideline papers to perform; and of the precise audience (or audiences) to which they should be addressed. Are they planning documents; essentially codification of short-term policy; or statements of current country programs? In some degree they seem to attempt all of these things -- and they should. But a proper balance depends, perhaps, on a sharper and more uniform definition both of the audience and the objective than some of the authors may have had in mind.

3. Relation to Planning. Although these papers will undoubtedly have a planning component, it seems to us important that they not be regarded as a substitute for planning studies addressed to particular tough problems. Concretely, it is impossible, in a guideline paper of this kind, to go deeply into a problem; to examine the pros and cons of alternative solutions; and to develop contingency plans. Of their nature they must be mainly an across-the-board statement of how we are trying to solve current problems, not an exploration of how unsolved problems might be solved. For example, the Egyptian, Italian, and Tunisian

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guideline papers touched briefly on difficult policy problems that evidently deserve extended treatment; that is, they touched lightly on the unresolved problems of getting closer to Nasser; of the opening to the left; and of Bizerte.

4. The Inside View. It might be worth your considering whether these guideline papers might not begin with a brief sketch of the key factors determining the development, orientation, and policy of the country examined; that is, with an inside view, rather than a view from Washington. We are somewhat tentative in putting forward this notion because it could lead to a vast and shapeless expansion of the texts. But a brief, incisive sketch of the key domestic and international problems might lead naturally into a definition of the areas where American interests impinge on the country; on the means of U.S. influence; and the U.S. programs of action as they stand. For example, several of us were struck by the usefulness of the review in the South African paper of the various means for exerting U. S. influence. This kind of exercise might be standardized.

5. Priority. We noted in some of the papers that various American objectives and policies were listed without a clear statement of the priority, timing, and emphasis to be accorded various elements in an American program; for example, in the Mali paper the maintenance of a French cultural presence was not distinguished in priority from the fundamental task of diluting Bloc ties in Mali. A keener sense of priorities might usefully suffuse the guideline papers.

6. Procedure. It would be helpful to us, as a simple matter of information, to know where responsibility for these guideline papers is focussed in the Department and what the mechanism of clearance is -- both within the Department and, especially, in the town as a whole. What mechanism do you envisage, for example, for resolving any major inter-agency disagreements which might arise? What mechanism for periodic follow-up and revision do you envisage?

7. Byproducts

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7. Byproducts. We noted that the exercise of doing these guideline papers might have two ancillary virtues if these virtues were sought: (a) defining certain relatively minor, back-of-the-stove problems which might grow in importance and which, in any case, deserve more serious treatment than they were currently being given on an inter-departmental basis; (b) the surfacing of honest differences of opinion among the departments with respect to a given country which might deserve exploration at, say, the Tuesday Planning lunch.

8. A Guideline Paper on Guideline Papers. In the light of your own reflections on these papers and in the light of the comments of others, those responsible in the Department for this function may wish to produce a new document of guidance which would be concerned not merely with the format of the papers but with the appropriate audience to which they might be addressed and to their substance.

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